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| (54) Title: POLYOL ESTER LUBRICANTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE COMPATIBLE WITH MINERAL OILS, FOR REFRIGERATING COMPRESSORS OPERATING AT HIGH TEMPERATURES | | |
| (57) Abstract <p>A high quality lubricant for compressors operated during at least part of their compression cycle at temperatures above normal human comfort temperatures, such as most automotive air conditioners, especially those using chlorine free hydrofluorocarbon refrigerant working fluids, is provided by mixed esters of hindered polyols, most desirably pentaerythritol, with a mixture of carboxylic acids including at least some iso-pentanoic acid along with one or more of iso-nonanoic acid, iso-octanoic acid, and dibasic acids such as adipic. When the mixture includes about 7 % adipic and amounts of branched C₈₋₉ and C₅ monobasic acids in a ratio of at least 0.75:1.00, the esters formed have excellent solubility for paraffinic and naphthenic mineral oils and are therefore especially well suited for lubricating vehicle air conditioners formerly containing chlorine containing heat transfer fluids and mineral oil lubricants.</p> | | |

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**POLYOL ESTER LUBRICANTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE COMPATIBLE
WITH MINERAL OILS, FOR REFRIGERATING COMPRESSORS
OPERATING AT HIGH TEMPERATURES**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation-in-part of copending Application Serial No. 08/027,629 filed March 10, 1993, which was a continuation-in-part of International Application No. PCT/US92/04438 designating the United States and filed June 3, 1992, the entire disclosure of which, except to the extent contrary to any explicit statement herein, is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to lubricant base stocks, which can also serve as complete lubricants in some cases; compounded lubricants, which include at least one additive for such purposes as improving high pressure and/or wear resistance, corrosion inhibition, and the like along with the lubricant base stocks which contribute the primary lubricity to the compounded lubricants; refrigerant working fluids including lubricants according to the invention along with primary heat transfer fluids, and methods for using these materials. The lubricants and lubricant base stocks are generally suitable for use with most or all halocarbon refrigerants and are particularly suitable for use with substantially chlorine-free, fluoro-group-containing organic refrigerating heat transfer fluids such as pentafluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, and tetrafluoroethanes, most particularly 1,1,1,2-tetrafluoroethane. The lubricants and base stocks, in combination with these heat transfer fluids, are particularly suitable for lubricating compressors that operate at least part of the time at temperatures substantially higher than those at which humans can be comfortable; such compressors are generally used, for example, in vehicle air conditioning.

Statement of Related Art

Chlorine-free heat transfer fluids are desirable for use in refrigerant systems, because their escape into the atmosphere causes less damage to the environment than the currently most commonly used chlorofluorocarbon heat transfer fluids such as trichlorofluoromethane and dichlorodifluoromethane. The widespread commercial use of chlorine-free refrigerant heat transfer fluids has been hindered, however, by the lack of commercially adequate lubricants. This is particularly true for one of the most desirable working fluids, 1,1,1,2-tetrafluoroethane, commonly known in the art as "Refrigerant 134a" or simply "R134a". Other fluoro-substituted ethanes are also desirable working fluids.

Before the change to substantially chlorine-free halocarbon refrigerants that was legally mandated during the last few years as a result of concern about the effect on chlorine containing emissions in harming the earth's ozone layer, it was conventional to use mineral oil lubricants for compressors of this type. Because of the design of many vehicle air conditioners, it has been found to be impossible to flush the former chlorine containing refrigerant heat transfer fluids and their associated mineral oil lubricants from the air conditioning equipment in these vehicles thoroughly. Instead, only drainage of the former fluids from the air conditioning equipment is possible, and such drainage can easily result in as much as 25 % of the formerly used mineral oil lubricant remaining behind in the equipment when it is retrofitted with a chlorine free heat transfer fluid and lubricants suitable for use with such heat transfer fluids.

Esters of hindered polyols, which are defined for this purpose as organic molecules containing at least five carbon atoms, at least 2 -OH groups, and no hydrogen atoms on any carbon atom directly attached to a carbon atom bearing an -OH group, have already been recognized in the art as high quality lubricant base-stocks for almost any type of refrigeration machinery employing a fluorocarbon refrigerant, particularly one free from chlorine. However, room for improvement in the art still exists.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Except in the claims and the operating examples, or where otherwise expressly indicated, all numerical quantities in this description indicating amounts of

material or conditions of reaction and/or use are to be understood as modified by the term "about" in defining the broadest scope of the invention. Practice of the invention within the boundaries corresponding to the numerical quantities stated is usually preferable, however. Also, unless explicitly stated to the contrary, the description of more than one chemical compound or class of compounds as suitable or preferred for the a particular purpose in connection with the invention shall be understood as implying that mixtures of any two or more of the entities so described individually as suitable or preferred are equally as suitable or preferred as the individual entities.

Object of the Invention

A major object of this invention is to provide lubricants that avoid phase separations when used with chlorine-free halocarbon refrigerants over a wide temperature range and that have good lubricity, resistance to hydrolysis and other chemical reactions leading to degradation in use, and viscosities in the range needed for most normal vehicle air conditioners; more specifically, esters according to this invention should have a viscosity of not more than 220, or with increasing preference in the order given, not more than 200, 173, 157, 145, 134, 123, 115, or 110, centistokes at 40° C. Independently, esters according to this invention should have a viscosity of at least 45, or with increasing preference in the order given, at least 51, 64, 76, 85, or 90, centistokes at 40° C. Another object of one major embodiment of the invention is to provide lubricants which, in addition to the other qualities described above, can be mixed with at least 25 % of its own mass of mineral oils, whether paraffinic or naphthenic oils or mixtures of both, such as those that might be left behind in drained vehicle air conditioning equipment as described above. Still another objective of the most preferred embodiments of this invention is to provide ester lubricants with good resistance to hydrolysis in use.

Summary of the Invention

It has now been found that selected polyol esters provide high quality lubrication for this kind of service. Specifically effective are esters or mixtures of esters made by reacting (i) a mixture of alcohol molecules selected from the group consisting of 2,2-dimethy-1,3-propanediol (also known as "neopentyl glycol" and often abbreviated hereinafter as "NPG"); 2,2-dimethylol-1-butanol (also known as "trimeth-

ylolpropane" and often abbreviated hereinafter as "TMP"); di-trimethylolpropane (often abbreviated hereinafter as "DTMP"), a molecule with four hydroxyl groups and one ether linkage, formally derived from two molecules of TMP by removing one hydroxyl group from one of the TMP molecules and one hydrogen atom from a hydroxyl group of the other TMP molecule to form water and join the two remain-
5 ders of the original TMP molecules with an ether bond; 2,2-dimethylol-1,3-propanediol (also known as "pentaerythritol" and often abbreviated hereinafter as "PE"); di-pentaerythritol (often abbreviated hereinafter as "DPE"), a molecule with six hydroxyl groups and one ether bond, formally derived from two PE molecules
10 by the same elimination of the elements of water as described above for DTMP; tri-pentaerythritol (often abbreviated hereinafter as "TPE"), a molecule with eight hydroxyl groups and two ether bonds, formally derived from three PE molecules by an analogous elimination of the elements of two molecules of water as described above (for elimination of a single water molecule) for DTMP and DPE; and tri-
15 trimethylolpropane (hereinafter often abbreviated as "TTMP"), a molecule with five hydroxyl groups and two ether bonds, formally derived from three TMP molecules by the same elimination of the elements of two molecules of water as described above for TPE, with (ii) a mixture of acid molecules selected from the group consisting of all the straight and branched chain monobasic and dibasic carboxylic
20 acids with from four to twelve carbon atoms each, with the alcohol moieties and acyl groups in the mixture of esters selected subject to the constraints that (a) a total of at least 3 %, or, with increasing preference in the order given, at least 7, 10, 14, 16, 19, 21, 23, 25, or 27 %, of the acyl groups in the mixture are 2-methylbutanoyl or 3-methylbutanoyl groups, which are jointly abbreviated hereinafter as "acyl
25 groups from [or of] i-C₅ acid"; (b) the ratio of the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain 8 or more carbon atoms and are unbranched to the % of acyl groups in the mixture that are both branched and contain not more than six, preferably not more than five, carbon atoms is not greater than 1.56, more preferably not greater than 1.21, or still more preferably not greater than 1.00; (c) the % of acyl groups in
30 the ester mixture that contain at least nine carbon atoms, whether branched or not, is not greater than 81, or increasingly more preferably, not greater than 67 or 49; (d) not more than 2, more preferably not more than 1, or still more preferably not

more than 0.4, % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture are from acid molecules with more than two carboxyl groups each; (e) a total of at least 20, or, with increasing preference in the order given, at least 29, 35, or 41 % of the acyl groups in the mixture are from monobasic acids containing eight or nine, preferably nine, carbon atoms per molecule and at least one, more preferably at least two, or still more preferably at least three, alkyl substituents, preferably methyl substituents, on the longest straight carbon chain in the molecule that includes the carbon which is part of the carboxyl group in the acid; most preferably these acyl group are from 3,5,5-trimethylhexanoic acid; and (f) at least 4.6, or with increasing preference in the order given, at least 5.1, 5.5, 5.9, or 6.1, %, but not more than 13 %, or, with increasing preference in the order given, not more than 10, 9.0, 8.3, 7.7, 7.2, 6.8, or 6.6, % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture are from molecules of dibasic acids with from four to ten, or preferably from five to seven, carbon atoms, or most preferably from adipic acid. In all these percentages, percentages of acyl groups refer to number or mole % rather than weight % and are based on the total of all acyl groups, and acyl groups are counted as a single group, irrespective of the number of valences they have. For example, each molecule of adipic acid yields a single, dibasic, acyl group when completely esterified.

(Of course, for all the types of esters described herein as part of the invention, it is possible to obtain the same esters or mixture of esters by reacting acid derivatives such as acid anhydrides, acyl chlorides, and esters of the acids with lower molecular weight alcohols than those desired in the ester products according to this invention, instead of reacting the acids themselves. The acids are generally preferred for economy and are normally specified herein, but it is to be understood that the esters defined herein by reaction with acids can be equally well obtained by reaction of alcohols with the corresponding acid derivatives, or even by other reactions. The only critical feature is the mixture of acyl groups and alcohol moieties in the final mixture of esters formed.)

Preferably, with increasing preference in the order given, at least 60, 75, 85, 90, 95, or 98 % of the hydroxyl groups in the mixture of alcohols reacted to make esters according to this invention are moieties of PE molecules. Independently, in the mixtures reacted to make the esters according to this invention, with increasing

preference in the order given, at least 60, 75, 85, 90, 95, or 98 % of the monobasic acid molecules in the acid mixture consist of molecules having no more than ten carbon atoms each and, with increasing preference in the order given, at least 60, 75, 85, 90, 95, or 98 % of the dibasic acid molecules in the acid mixture consist of molecules having no more than ten carbon atoms each, or more preferably from five to seven carbon atoms each. Most preferably, with increasing preference in the order given, at least 60, 75, 85, 90, 95, or 98 % of the monobasic acid molecules in the acid mixture consist of molecules having either five, eight, or nine, more preferably five or nine, carbon atoms each. Where the ability of the ester lubricant to dissolve at least 25 % of its own weight of paraffinic and/or naphthenic mineral oil is desired as described above, it is preferred, with increasing preference in the order given, that the ratio of the % of acyl groups with 8 and/or 9 carbon atoms to the % of acyl groups with 5 carbon atoms have a value of at least 0.63:1.00, 0.66:1.00, 0.69:1.00, 0.72:1.00, 0.75:1.00, 0.78:1.00, 0.82:1.00, 0.85:1.00, or 0.87:1.00.

These preferences for the acyl groups and alcohol moieties in esters according to this invention are based on empirically determined generalizations. In order to achieve the desired range of viscosity, corresponding approximately to ISO grades 50 - 220, it is advantageous to have a substantial fraction of alcohols with at least four hydroxyl groups. Among the commercially available hindered alcohols that satisfy this criterion, PE is less expensive than DTMP and is free from the ether linkage in DTMP, which increases the hygroscopicity of the esters formed and thereby may promote undesirable corrosion of the metal surfaces lubricated. Alcohols with more than four hydroxyl groups produce esters with higher than optimum viscosities, but some such esters can be tolerated, and mixtures including them may be cheaper. Commercial grade PE often contains a substantial amount of DPE, and costs at least a little less than more purified PE. When cost factors are not severely constraining, removing most or all of the DPE from a predominantly PE mixture of alcohols used to make the esters is preferable, in order to minimize the chance of insolubility of part of the ester mixture at low temperatures.

In order to obtain esters with adequate viscosity, a considerable fraction of the acid molecules reacted need to have eight or more carbon atoms or be dibasic.

In general, using at least some dibasic acid is preferred for ester mixtures in this viscosity range, especially in the upper part of the range, but the amount of dibasic acid must be carefully controlled to avoid the undesired possibility of forming a substantial fraction of very high molecular weight polymeric or oligomeric esters, which would be inadequately soluble.

When substantially only monobasic acids are used to make the esters, in order to obtain adequate viscosity in the mixture, a substantial fraction of the acid molecules must have at least eight carbon atoms. With acids of such length, solubility in the fluorocarbon refrigerant fluids is less than for esters with shorter acids, and this reduced solubility is particularly marked for straight chain acids, so that a substantial fraction of the longer acids normally needs to be branched; alternatively, it has been found that these longer straight chain acids can be "balanced" for solubility with an equal or not too much less than equal fraction of branched acids with five or six carbon atoms. When the number of carbon atoms per molecule is nine or more, not even branching is sufficient to produce adequate solubility by itself, so that an upper limit on the fraction of such acids is independently required. In general, a minimum amount of the particularly advantageous i-C₉ acid is specified to aid in solubilizing the parts of the esters in the mixture that contain dibasic acids or those with eight or more carbon atoms.

For both performance and economic reasons, it has been found that five and nine (or less preferably, eight) carbon monobasic acids are the most preferred constituents, and they are very effective in balancing each other to achieve a mix of viscosity and solubility characteristics that is better suited than others to most applications. Trimethylhexanoic acids, with their three methyl branches, produce the most soluble esters among the relatively few types of nine carbon acids that are readily available commercially. An economical commercially available mixture of branched nine carbon acids, which contains from 88 - 95 mole % of 3,5,5-trimethylhexanoic acid with all but at most 1 mole % of the remainder being other branched C₉ monobasic acids, appears at least as effective as any other and is therefore preferred for economic reasons as the source of C₉ monobasic acids. (In general, methyl branches are the most effective in promoting solubility without increasing viscosity excessively, because of the larger number of carbon atoms in

other branching groups.) Branches on the carbon alpha to the carboxyl increase the difficulty of esterification and do not appear to be any more effective in increasing solubility than more remotely located branches. However, esters formed with acids having branches alpha to the carboxyl group may have superior resistance to hydrolysis. Thus, the branched eight carbon acid that is most readily available commercially, 2-ethylhexanoic acid, is suitable for use according to this invention in lieu of or in addition to nine carbon acids, although the latter are generally preferred. If maximum stability against hydrolysis is required, 2-ethylhexanoic acid may be preferred over any of the nine carbon acids that are readily available commercially, because these include little or none of the isomers with branching alpha to the carboxyl group.

In addition to the other criteria noted above, in order to have higher solubility for paraffinic and/or naphthenic oil lubricants, the fraction of nine and/or eight carbon acids present must be sufficiently high, because esters from too large a fraction of acids with six or fewer carbon atoms, whether monobasic or dibasic, were found to dissolve inadequate amounts of mineral oils, especially paraffinic ones.

It is to be understood that only the desired alcohols and acids are explicitly specified, but some amount of the sort of impurities normally present in commercial or industrial grade products can be tolerated in most cases. For example, commercial pentaerythritol normally contains only about 85 - 90 mole % of pure pentaerythritol, along with 10 - 15 mole % of di-pentaerythritol, and commercial pentaerythritol is satisfactory for use in making lubricant esters according to this invention in many cases. In general, however, it is preferred, with increasing preference in the order given, that not more than 25, 21, 17, 12, 8, 5, 3, 2, 1, 0.5, or 0.2 % of either the hydroxyl groups in the alcohol mixtures specified herein or of the carboxyl groups in the acid mixtures specified herein should be part of any molecules other than those explicitly specified for each type of lubricant base stock. Percentages of specific chemical molecules or moieties specified herein, such as the percentages of carboxyl and hydroxyl groups stated in the preceding sentence, are to be understood as number percentages, which will be mathematically identical to percentages by chemical equivalents, with Avogadro's number of each specified

chemical moiety regarded as a single chemical equivalent.

The above descriptions for each of the acid and alcohol mixtures reacted to produce lubricant esters according to this invention refers only to the mixture of acids or alcohols that actually reacts to form esters and does not necessarily imply
5 that the mixtures of acids or alcohols contacted with each other for the purpose of reaction will have the same composition as the mixture that actually reacts. In fact, it has been found that reaction between the alcohol(s) and the acid(s) used proceeds more effectively if the quantity of acid charged to the reaction mixture initially is enough to provide an excess of 10 - 25 % of equivalents of acid over the equiva-
10 lents of alcohol reacted with the acid. (An equivalent of acid is defined for the purposes of this specification as the amount containing one gram equivalent weight of carboxyl groups, while an equivalent of alcohol is the amount containing one gram equivalent weight of hydroxyl groups.) The composition of the mixture of acids that actually reacted can be determined by analysis of the product ester
15 mixture for its acyl group content.

In making most or all of the esters and mixtures of esters preferred according to this invention, the acid(s) reacted will be lower boiling than the alcohol(s) reacted and the product ester(s). When this condition obtains, it is preferred to remove the bulk of any excess acid remaining at the end of the esterification
20 reaction by distillation, most preferably at a low pressure such as 1 - 5 torr.

After such vacuum distillation, the product is often ready for use as a lubricant or lubricant base stock according to this invention. If further refinement of the product is desired, the content of free acid in the product after the first vacuum distillation may be further reduced by treatment with epoxy esters as taught in U. S.
25 Patent 3,485,754 or by neutralization with any suitable alkaline material such as lime, alkali metal hydroxide, or alkali metal carbonates. If treatment with epoxy esters is used, excess epoxy ester may be removed by a second distillation under very low pressure, while the products of reaction between the epoxy ester and residual acid may be left behind in the product without harm. If neutralization with alkali
30 is used as the refinement method, subsequent washing with water, to remove any unreacted excess alkali and the small amount of soap formed from the excess fatty acid neutralized by the alkali, is strongly preferred before using the product as a

lubricant and/or base stock according to this invention.

Under some conditions of use, the ester(s) as described herein will function satisfactorily as complete lubricants. It is generally preferable, however, for a complete lubricant to contain other materials generally denoted in the art as additives, such as oxidation resistance and thermal stability improvers, corrosion inhibitors, metal deactivators, lubricity additives, viscosity index improvers, pour and/or floc point depressants, detergents, dispersants, antifoaming agents, acid scavengers, anti-wear agents, and extreme pressure resistant additives. Many additives are multi-functional. For example, certain additives may impart both anti-wear and extreme pressure resistance properties, or function both as a metal deactivator and a corrosion inhibitor. Cumulatively, all additives preferably do not exceed 8 % by weight, or more preferably do not exceed 5 % by weight, of the total compounded lubricant formulation.

An effective amount of the foregoing additive types is generally in the range from 0.01 to 5 % for the antioxidant component, 0.01 to 5 % for the corrosion inhibitor component, from 0.001 to 0.5 % for the metal deactivator component, from 0.5 to 5 % for the lubricity additives, from 0.01 to 2 % for each of the acid scavengers, viscosity index improvers, and pour and/or floc point depressants, from 0.1 to 5 % for each of the detergents and dispersants, from 0.001 to 0.1 % for anti-foam agents, and from 0.1 - 2 % for each of the anti-wear and extreme pressure resistance components. All these percentages are by weight and are based on the total lubricant composition. It is to be understood that more or less than the stated amounts of additives may be more suitable to particular circumstances, and that a single molecular type or a mixture of types may be used for each type of additive component. Also, the examples listed below are intended to be merely illustrative and not limiting, except as described in the appended claims.

Examples of suitable oxidation resistance and thermal stability improvers are diphenyl-, dinaphthyl-, and phenylnaphthyl-amines, in which the phenyl and naphthyl groups can be substituted, e.g., N,N'-diphenyl phenylenediamine, p-octyldiphenylamine, p,p-diocetyldiphenylamine, N-phenyl-1-naphthyl amine, N-phenyl-2-naphthyl amine, N-(p-dodecyl)phenyl-2-naphthyl amine, di-1-naphthylamine, and di-2-naphthylamine; phenothazines such as N-alkylphenothiazines; imino(bisbenzyl);

and hindered phenols such as 6-(t-butyl) phenol, 2,6-di-(t-butyl) phenol, 4-methyl-2,6-di-(t-butyl) phenol, 4,4'-methylenebis(-2,6-di-{t-butyl} phenol), and the like.

Examples of suitable cuprous metal deactivators are imidazole, benzamida-
zole, 2-mercaptobenzthiazole, 2,5-dimercaptothiadiazole, salicylidine-propylenedia-
mine, pyrazole, benzotriazole, tolutriazole, 2-methylbenzamidazole, 3,5-dimethyl
pyrazole, and methylene bis-benzotriazole. Benzotriazole derivatives are preferred.
Other examples of more general metal deactivators and/or corrosion inhibitors in-
clude organic acids and their esters, metal salts, and anhydrides, e.g., N-oleyl-sar-
cosine, sorbitan monooleate, lead naphthenate, dodecenyl-succinic acid and its par-
tial esters and amides, and 4-nonylphenoxy acetic acid; primary, secondary, and
tertiary aliphatic and cycloaliphatic amines and amine salts of organic and inorganic
acids, e.g., oil-soluble alkylammonium carboxylates; heterocyclic nitrogen
containing compounds, e.g., thiadiazoles, substituted imidazolines, and oxazolines;
quinolines, quinones, and anthraquinones; propyl gallate; barium dinonyl
naphthalene sulfonate; ester and amide derivatives of alkenyl succinic anhydrides or
acids, dithiocarbamates, dithiophosphates; amine salts of alkyl acid phosphates and
their derivatives.

Examples of suitable lubricity additives include long chain derivatives of
fatty acids and natural oils, such as esters, amines, amides, imidazolines, and
borates.

Examples of suitable viscosity index improvers include polymethacrylates,
copolymers of vinyl pyrrolidone and methacrylates, polybutenes, and styrene-
acrylate copolymers.

Examples of suitable pour point and/or floc point depressants include poly-
methacrylates such as methacrylate-ethylene-vinyl acetate terpolymers; alkylated
naphthalene derivatives; and products of Friedel-Crafts catalyzed condensation of
urea with naphthalene or phenols.

Examples of suitable detergents and/or dispersants include polybutenylsuccin-
ic acid amides; polybutenyl phosphonic acid derivatives; long chain alkyl substituted
aromatic sulfonic acids and their salts; and metal salts of alkyl sulfides, of alkyl
phenols, and of condensation products of alkyl phenols and aldehydes.

Examples of suitable anti-foam agents include silicone polymers and some

acrylates. Examples of suitable acid scavengers are glycidyl ethers and esters.

Examples of suitable anti-wear and extreme pressure resistance agents include sulfurized fatty acids and fatty acid esters, such as sulfurized octyl tallate; sulfurized terpenes; sulfurized olefins; organopolysulfides; organo phosphorus derivatives including amine phosphates, alkyl acid phosphates, dialkyl phosphates, 5 aminedithiophosphates, trialkyl and triaryl phosphorothionates, trialkyl and triaryl phosphines, and dialkylphosphites, e.g., amine salts of phosphoric acid monohexyl ester, amine salts of dinonylnaphthalene sulfonate, triphenyl phosphate, trinaphthyl phosphate, diphenyl cresyl and dicresyl phenyl phosphates, naphthyl diphenyl 10 phosphate, triphenylphosphorothionate; dithiocarbamates, such as an antimony dialkyl dithiocarbamate; chlorinated and/or fluorinated hydrocarbons; and xanthates.

Under some conditions of operation, it is believed that the presence in lubricants of the types of polyether polyols that have been prominent constituents of most prior art lubricant base stocks taught as useful with fluorocarbon refrigerant working 15 fluids are less than optimally stable and/or inadequately compatible with some of the most useful lubricant additives. Thus, in one embodiment of this invention, it is preferred that the lubricant base stocks and lubricants be substantially free of such polyether polyols. By "substantially free", it is meant that the compositions contain no more than about 10 % by weight, preferably no more than about 2.6 % by 20 weight, and more preferably no more than about 1.2 % by weight of the materials noted.

One major embodiment of the present invention is a refrigerant working fluid comprising both a suitable heat transfer fluid such as a fluorocarbon and a lubricant according to this invention. Preferably, the refrigerant working fluid and the lubri- 25 cant should have chemical characteristics and be present in such a proportion to each other that the working fluid remains homogeneous, i.e., free from visually detectable phase separations or turbidity, over the entire range of working temperatures to which the working fluid is exposed during operation of a refrigeration system in which the working fluid is used. This working range may vary from -60° 30 C to as much as +175° C. It is often adequate if the working fluid remains single phase up to +30° C, although it is increasingly more preferable if the single phase behavior is maintained up to 40, 56, 71, 88, or 100 ° C. Similarly, it is often

adequate if the working fluid compositions remains a single phase when chilled to 0° C, although it is increasingly more preferable if the single phase behavior persists to -10, -20, -30, -40, or -55 ° C. Single phase mixtures with chlorine free hydrofluorocarbon refrigerant working fluids are usually obtained with the suitable and preferred types of esters described above.

Inasmuch as it is often difficult to predict exactly how much lubricant will be mixed with the heat transfer fluid to form a working fluid, it is most preferable if the lubricant composition forms a single phase in all proportions with the heat transfer fluid over the temperature ranges noted above. This however, is a very stringent requirement, and it is often sufficient if there is single phase behavior over the entire temperature range for a working fluid mixture containing up to 1 % by weight of lubricant according to this invention. Single phase behavior over a temperature range for mixtures containing up to 2, 4, 10, and 15 % by weight of lubricant is successively more preferable.

In some cases, single phase behavior is not required. The term "miscible" is used in the refrigeration lubrication art and hereinafter, except when part of the phrase "miscible in all proportions", when two phases are formed but are readily capable of being mixed into a uniform dispersion that remains stable as long as it is at least moderately agitated mechanically. Some refrigeration (and other) compressors are designed to operate satisfactorily with such miscible mixtures of refrigerant working fluid and lubricant. In contrast, mixtures that lead to coagulation or significant thickening and form two or more phases are unacceptable commercially and are designated herein as "immiscible". Any such mixture described below is a comparative example and not an embodiment of the present invention.

Another major embodiment of the invention is the use of a lubricant according to the invention, either as total lubricant or lubricant base stock, in a process of operating refrigerating machinery in such a manner that the lubricant is in contact with the refrigerant working fluid.

The practice of the invention may be further understood and appreciated by consideration of the following examples and comparative examples.

General Ester Synthesis Procedure

The alcohol(s) and acid(s) to be reacted, together with a suitable catalyst

such as dibutyltin diacetate, tin oxalate, phosphoric acid, and/or tetrabutyl titanate, were charged into a round bottomed flask equipped with a stirrer, thermometer, nitrogen sparging means, condenser, and a recycle trap. Acid(s) were charged in about a 15 % molar excess over the alcohol(s). The amount of catalyst was from
5 0.02 to 0.1 % by weight of the weight of the total acid(s) and alcohol(s) reacted.

The reaction mixture was heated to a temperature between about 220 and 230° C, and water from the resulting reaction was collected in the trap while refluxing acids were returned to the reaction mixture. Partial vacuum was maintained above the reaction mixture as necessary to achieve a reflux rate of between 8 and 12
10 % of the original reaction mixture volume per hour.

The reaction mixture was sampled occasionally for determination of hydroxyl number, and after the hydroxyl number had fallen below 5.0 mg of KOH per gram of mixture, the majority of the excess acid was removed by distillation after applying the highest vacuum obtainable with the apparatus used, corresponding to a
15 residual pressure of about 0.05 torr, while maintaining the reaction temperature. The reaction mixture was then cooled, and any residual acidity was removed, if desired, by treatment with lime, sodium hydroxide, or epoxy esters. The resulting lubricant or lubricant base stock was dried and filtered before phase compatibility testing.

20 General Procedure for Phase Compatibility Testing

One milliliter ("ml") of the lubricant to be tested is placed into a thermal shock resistant, volumetrically graduated glass test tube 17 millimeters ("mm") in diameter and 145 mm long. The test tube is then stoppered and placed into a cooling bath regulated to $-29 \pm 0.2^{\circ}$ C. After the tube and contents have
25 equilibrated in the cooling bath for 5 minutes ("min"), sufficient refrigerant working fluid is added to give a total volume of 10 ml.

At least 15 min after the working fluid has been added, during which time the tube and contents have been equilibrating in the cooling bath and the contents may have been agitated if desired, the tube contents are visually examined for evidence of phase separation. If there is any such phase separation, the tube is shaken
30 to determine whether the combination can be rated as miscible or is totally unacceptable.

If there is no evidence of phase separation at -29°C , the temperature of the cooling bath is usually lowered at a rate of 0.3° per min until phase separation is observed. The temperature of first observation of phase separation, if within the range of the cooling equipment used, is then noted as the insolubility onset temperature.

Example 1

A suitable ester mixture as described above, for operations not requiring compatibility with mineral oil, was prepared by reacting a mixture of alcohol molecules in which 99.4 % were PE molecules, with most of the remainder being DPE molecules, with a mixture of acid molecules that included 57.1 % of pentanoic (= n-valeric) acid, 30.7 % of 2-methylbutanoic acid, and 11.7 % of adipic acid, with the remainder predominantly 3-methylbutanoic acid. This ester mixture had an ISO grade of 100.

Examples 2 - 5

This group of examples illustrates esters with marginal to excellent ability to dissolve paraffinic and naphthenic mineral oils. These esters were made by reacting the same alcohol as noted for Example 1 with mixtures of acid molecules that included five carbon and nine carbon monobasic acids and adipic acid as shown in Table 1 below. All of the esters from Examples 2 - 5 are at least miscible, and those from examples 3 - 5 are soluble, at -40°C in R134a. Naphthenic mineral oils, in contrast to the more difficultly soluble paraffinic oils, are soluble in all these esters to an extent of at least 25 %. All these solubilities are measured at ambient temperatures of about 23°C .

Esters according to Examples 2 - 5 also had excellent stability against hydrolysis, as measured by a test in which the resistance to hydrolysis is measured by the amount of iron carboxylates formed under prescribed test conditions. Results according to this test for esters according to Examples 2 - 5 showed as great a resistance to hydrolysis as with esters of the same types of alcohol in which substantially the only acyl groups were those from 2-ethylhexanoic acid.

TABLE 1

| <u>Type and Size of Acid Molecules</u> | <u>Number % f Moles of Acid in Example N .:</u> | | | |
|---|---|----------|----------|----------|
| | <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | <u>4</u> | <u>5</u> |
| Monobasic C ₅ | 57.6 | 50.1 | 45.6 | 37.3 |
| Monobasic C ₉ | 36.4 | 43.7 | 48.1 | 56.1 |
| Adipic acid | 6.0 | 6.2 | 6.3 | 6.5 |
| <u>OTHER PROPERTIES</u> | | | | |
| Viscosity of Ester at 40° C in Centi- stokes | 77 | 91 | 99 | 91 |
| % Solubility of Paraffinic Mineral Oil in Ester | 25 ¹ | > 25 | > 25 | > 25 |

General Notes for Table 1

The monobasic C₅ acid used was 65 ± 2 % n-pentanoic acid with the balance i-C₅ acid. The monobasic C₉ acid used for Examples 2 - 4 was at least 90 % 3,5,5-trimethylhexanoic acid, with the remainder predominantly other trimethylhexanoic acids. For Example 5, the monobasic C₉ acid was a mixture of many isomers of C₉ acids, with an NMR spectrum indicating an average of about 3 methyl groups per molecule and a gas chromatogram indicating about 40 separate peaks, with the four largest peaks accounting for only 18, 15, 12, and 10 % of the total area in the chromatogram and no other peak accounting for as much as 6 % of the total area.

Footnote for Table 1

¹A 25 % solution of mineral oil in this ester remains clear while being stirred, but develops a slight haze on standing.

The invention claimed is:

CLAIMS

1. A composition of matter suitable for serving as a lubricant or lubricant base stock, said composition being a liquid with a viscosity between about 45 and about 220 centistokes at 40° C and consisting essentially of a mixture of polyol ester molecules in which at least about 92 % of the alcohol moieties are derived from PE and at least about 92 % of the acyl groups are selected from the group consisting of the acyl groups of all the straight and branched chain monobasic and dibasic carboxylic acids with from four to twelve carbon atoms each, said alcohol moieties and acyl groups being further selected subject to constraints that (a) a total of at least about 5 % of the acyl groups in the mixture are acyl groups of i-C₅ acid; (b) the ratio of the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain 8 or more carbon atoms and are unbranched to the % of acyl groups in the mixture that are both branched and contain not more than six carbon atoms is not greater than about 1.56; (c) the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain at least nine carbon atoms, whether branched or not, is not greater than about 81; (d) not more than about 2 % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture are part of acid molecules with more than two carboxyl groups each; (e) a total of at least about 20 % of the acyl groups in the mixture are from C₇ and C₈ acids with at least two alkyl substituent branches per molecule of acid; and (f) at least about 4.6 % but not more than about 13 % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture are from adipic acid.

2. A composition according to claim 1, with a viscosity between about 51 and about 145 centistokes at 40° C and consisting essentially of a mixture of polyol ester molecules in which the alcohol moieties and acyl groups are selected subject to the constraints that (a) a total of at least about 10 % of the acyl groups in the mixture
5 are acyl groups of i-C₅ acid; (b) the ratio of the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain 8 or more carbon atoms and are unbranched to the % of acyl groups in the mixture that are both branched and contain not more than six carbon atoms is not greater than about 1.56; (c) the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain at least nine carbon atoms, whether branched or not, is not greater than about 67; (e)
10 a total of at least about 29 % of the acyl groups in the mixture are monobasic acids with eight or nine carbon atom and an average of at least about 3 methyl groups per molecule; (f) at least about 5.1 % but not more than about 10 % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture are from adipic acid; and (g) the ratio of the % of acyl groups with 8 or 9 carbon atoms to the % of acyl groups with 5 carbon atoms is at least
15 about 0.63:1.00.

3. A composition according to claim 2 with a viscosity between about 64 and about 134 centistokes at 40° C and consisting essentially of a mixture of polyol ester molecules in which at least about 95 % of the alcohol moieties are derived from PE and at least about 95 % of the acyl groups are selected from the group consisting of the acyl groups of all the straight and branched chain monobasic and dibasic carboxylic acids with from four to twelve carbon atoms each, said alcohol moieties and acyl groups being further selected subject to the constraints that (a) a total of at least about 14 % of the acyl groups in the mixture are acyl groups of i-C₅ acid; (b) the ratio of the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain 8 or more carbon atoms and are unbranched to the % of acyl groups in the mixture that are both branched and contain not more than six carbon atoms is not greater than about 1.21; (c) the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain at least nine carbon atoms, whether branched or not, is not greater than about 67; (d) not more than 1 % of the acyl groups in the esters contain more than two carboxyl groups each; (e) a total of at least about 35 % of the acyl groups in the mixture are from 3,5,5-trimethylhexanoic acid; (f) at least about 5.5 % but not more than about 9.0 % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture are from adipic acid; and (g) the ratio of the % of acyl groups with 9 carbon atoms to the % of acyl groups with 5 carbon atoms is at least about 0.69:1.00.

4. A composition according to claim 3 with a viscosity between about 85 and about 123 centistokes at 40° C and consisting essentially of a mixture of polyol ester molecules in which the alcohol moieties and acyl groups are selected subject to the constraints that (a) a total of at least about 14 % of the acyl groups in the mixture are acyl groups of i-C₅ acid; (b) the ratio of the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain 8 or more carbon atoms and are unbranched to the % of acyl groups in the mixture that are both branched and contain not more than six carbon atoms is not greater than about 1.00; (c) the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain at least nine carbon atoms, whether branched or not, is not greater than about 49; (d) not more than 0.4 % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture contain more than two carbonyl groups each; (e) a total of at least about 41 % of the acyl groups in the mixture are from 3,5,5-trimethylhexanoic acid; (f) at least about 5.9 % but not more than about 7.7 % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture are from adipic acid; and (g) the ratio of the % of acyl groups with 9 carbon atoms to the % of acyl groups with 5 carbon atoms is at least about 0.78:1.00.

5. A composition according to claim 4 with a viscosity between about 90 and about 110 centistokes at 40° C and consisting essentially of a mixture of polyol ester molecules in which at least about 95 % of the acyl groups are selected from the group consisting of the acyl groups of all the straight and branched chain monobasic and dibasic carboxylic acids with from four to twelve carbon atoms each and the alcohol moieties and acyl groups are selected subject to the constraints that (a) a total of at least 16 % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture are acyl groups of i-C₅ acid; (b) the ratio of the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain 8 or more carbon atoms and are unbranched to the % of acyl groups in the mixture that are both branched and contain not more than five carbon atoms is not greater than about 1.00; (c) the % of acyl groups in the mixture that contain at least nine carbon atoms, whether branched or not, is not greater than about 49; (d) not more than 0.4 % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture contain more than two carbonyl groups each; (e) a total of at least about 41 % of the acyl groups in the mixture are from 3,5,5-trimethylhexanoic acid; (f) at least about 6.1 % but not more than about 6.6 % of the acyl groups in the ester mixture are from adipic acid; and (g) the ratio of the % of acyl groups with 9 carbon atoms to the % of acyl groups with 5 carbon atoms is at least about 0.87:1.00.

6. A compounded lubricant consisting essentially of at least about 95 % by weight of a composition according to claim 5 and a balance of one or more additives selected from the group consisting of oxidation resistance and thermal stability improvers, corrosion inhibitors, metal deactivators, lubricity additives, viscosity index improvers, pour and floc point depressants, detergents, acid scavengers, dispersants, antifoaming agents, anti-wear agents, and extreme pressure resistant additives.

7. A compounded lubricant consisting essentially of at least about 92 % by weight of a composition according to claim 3 and a balance of one or more additives selected from the group consisting of oxidation resistance and thermal stability improvers, corrosion inhibitors, metal deactivators, lubricity additives, viscosity index improvers, pour and floc point depressants, detergents, acid scavengers, dispersants, antifoaming agents, anti-wear agents, and extreme pressure resistant additives.

8 A compounded lubricant consisting essentially of at least about 92 % by
weight of a compound according to claim 1 and a balance of one or more additives
selected from the group consisting of oxidation resistance and thermal stability
improvers, corrosion inhibitors, metal deactivators, lubricity additives, viscosity
5 index improvers, pour and floc point depressants, detergents, scavengers, dis-
persants, antifoaming agents, anti-wear agents, and extreme pressure resista-
additives.

9. A refrigerant working fluid consisting essentially of at least about 85 % by
weight of a primary heat transfer fluid selected from the group consisting of penta-
10 fluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and
mixtures thereof and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 8.

10. A refrigerant working fluid consisting essentially of at least about 85 % by
weight of a primary heat transfer fluid selected from the group consisting of penta-
fluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and
15 mixtures thereof and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 7.

11. A refrigerant working fluid consisting essentially of at least about 85 % by
weight of a primary heat transfer fluid selected from the group consisting of penta-
fluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and
mixtures thereof and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 6.

20 12. A refrigerant working fluid consisting essentially of at least about 85 % by
weight of 1,1,1,2-tetrafluoroethane and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 5.

13. A refrigerant working fluid consisting essentially of at least about 85 % by
weight of a primary heat transfer fluid selected from the group consisting of penta-
fluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and
25 mixtures thereof and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 4.

14. A refrigerant working fluid consisting essentially of at least about 85 % by
weight of a primary heat transfer fluid selected from the group consisting of penta-
fluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and
mixtures thereof and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 3.

15. A refrigerant working fluid consisting essentially of at least about 85 % by weight of a primary heat transfer fluid selected from the group consisting of pentafluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and mixtures thereof and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 3.
- 5 16. A refrigerant working fluid consisting essentially of at least about 85 % by weight of a primary heat transfer fluid selected from the group consisting of pentafluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and mixtures thereof and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 2.
- 10 17. A refrigerant working fluid consisting essentially of at least about 85 % by weight of a primary heat transfer fluid selected from the group consisting of pentafluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and mixtures thereof and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 1.
- 15 18. A process comprising steps of (I) draining a refrigerant heat transfer fluid made of molecules containing at least one chlorine atom per molecule and mineral oil lubricant dissolved therein from an unflushable compressor and associated piping in a vehicle air conditioner, (II) replacing the refrigerant heat transfer fluid in all parts of the vehicle air conditioner designed to contain such fluid with one selected from the group consisting of pentafluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and mixtures thereof, and lubricating the vehicle air conditioner with a lubricant according to claim 6.
- 20 19. A process comprising steps of (I) draining a refrigerant heat transfer fluid made of molecules containing at least one chlorine atom per molecule and mineral oil lubricant dissolved therein from an unflushable compressor and associated piping in a vehicle air conditioner, (II) replacing the refrigerant heat transfer fluid in all parts of the vehicle air conditioner designed to contain such fluid with one selected from the group consisting of pentafluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and mixtures thereof, and lubricating the vehicle air conditioner with a lubricant according to claim 1.
- 25

20. A process for operating a refrigerator comprising cyclic compression, liquefaction, expansion, and evaporation of a heat transfer fluid, said heat transfer fluid consisting essentially of at least 85 % by weight of a primary heat transfer fluid selected from the group consisting of pentafluoroethane, 1,1-difluoroethane, 1,1,1-trifluoroethane, tetrafluoroethanes, and mixtures thereof and a balance of a lubricant according to claim 1.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US94/12544

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) : C09K 5/04; C10M 105/32

US CL : 252/56R, 56S, 67, 68

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 252/56R, 56S, 67, 68

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
NONE

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
NONE

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|
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| Y | EP, A, 0,415,778 (HAGIHARA ET AL) 06 MARCH 1991, page 3, line 22 - page 4, line 4. | 1-20 |
| Y | EP, A, 0,406,479 (KAIMAI ET AL) 09 JANUARY 1991, page 4, lines 13-42. | 1-20 |
| Y | WO, A, 90/12849 (JOLLEY) 01 NOVEMBER 1990, page 12 - page 14. | 1-20 |
| Y | EP, A, 0,458,584 (BUNEMANN ET AL) 27 NOVEMBER 1991, page 2, lines 35 -57. | 1-20 |
| Y | EP, A, 0,435,253 (HASEGAWA ET AL) 03 JULY 1991, page 3, lines 9-20 and page 5, lines 23-35. | 1-20 |

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

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| * O document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means | |
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT**International application No.**
PCT/US94/12544**C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

| Category* | Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages | Relevant to claim No. |
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| Y | US, A, 5,021,179 (ZEHLER ET AL) 04 JUNE 1991, col. 10, line 57 - col. 11, line 17. | 1-20 |